

Work Readiness of Indonesian Students: Phenomenological Study of International Internship Experience and Work Motivation in Taiwan

¹Andriana Indah Kurniawati Laia, ²Bayu Ade Prabowo

^{1,2}Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Pariwisata Indonesia Semarang, Indonesia

*Email: bayuprabowo@stiepari.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<i>Keywords:</i> Work Readiness, International Internship, Work Motivation, Phenomenological Study Cross-Cultural Experience	PURPOSE - This study explores how international internship experiences in Taiwan shape work readiness and work motivation among Indonesian business students from STIEPARI Semarang. Limited research examines the phenomenological dimensions of how students subjectively experience international internships, particularly in the Indonesia-Taiwan educational mobility pathway. METHODOLOGY - A qualitative phenomenological design employed purposive sampling of seven STIEPARI students: three currently interning in Taiwan and four returned to Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews (45-60 minutes) guided by 25 open-ended questions across nine thematic domains. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis was applied, with trustworthiness established through member checking, thick description, audit trails, and reflexivity journaling. FINDING - Five themes emerged: (1) international internship as transformative cultural immersion; (2) multidimensional skill development through authentic work engagement; (3) cross-cultural challenges as catalysts for resilience and adaptability; (4) work motivation evolution from extrinsic to intrinsic orientations; and (5) enhanced work readiness integrating competencies with psychological confidence and global cultural intelligence. Findings validate Experiential Learning Theory and Self-Determination Theory while extending work readiness frameworks to include global competence as a critical fifth dimension, offering implications for higher education institutions designing international programs.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapidly evolving global workforce demands that higher education institutions prepare graduates who possess not only theoretical knowledge but also practical competencies and psychological readiness to enter professional environments (Caballero et al., 2011). Work



readiness, defined as the possession of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and understanding necessary to meet workplace expectations and adapt to organizational culture (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007), has become a critical outcome measure for tertiary education. In the Indonesian context, where youth unemployment among university graduates remains a persistent challenge, enhancing work readiness through experiential learning opportunities has gained prominence as a strategic educational intervention (Latif et al., 2017). Among various experiential learning modalities, international internships represent a particularly valuable yet underexplored mechanism for developing work readiness, offering students exposure to cross-cultural work environments, global professional standards, and opportunities for personal transformation beyond what domestic placements can provide (Di Pietro, 2022).

International internship programs have proliferated across Asian higher education institutions as part of broader internationalization strategies, with Taiwan emerging as a key destination for Indonesian students seeking work-based learning experiences in hospitality, tourism, and service industries. These programs theoretically align with Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory, which posits that learning occurs through a cyclical process of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. For Indonesian students participating in international internships, this learning cycle operates within a distinctive cross-cultural context characterized by language barriers, cultural adaptation challenges, and exposure to different workplace norms—factors that potentially amplify both the developmental benefits and the psychological demands of the experience (Chen, 2025). Furthermore, the relationship between internship experiences and work readiness is mediated by motivational factors, as suggested by Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which emphasizes that satisfaction of basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness during work experiences shapes intrinsic motivation and subsequent career development.

Despite growing scholarly attention to graduate employability and work readiness in Indonesia (Sultoni et al., 2022), existing research exhibits three critical limitations. First, while quantitative studies have established positive correlations between internship experience and work readiness among Indonesian vocational students (Fauzan et al., 2023; Supriyanto et al., 2022), these studies do not illuminate the phenomenological dimensions of how students subjectively experience, interpret, and make meaning from their internship journeys. Second, research on international internships has predominantly focused on Western contexts or intra-East Asian student mobility (Lyu, 2022; Rosev, 2020), leaving the experiences of Southeast Asian students—particularly those from Indonesia participating in Taiwanese internship programs—largely unexplored. Third, the interplay between international internship experiences, work motivation development, and work readiness formation remains inadequately theorized from interpretivist perspectives that privilege student voice and lived experience. As Jackson and Bridgstock (2018) argue, employability and work readiness involve complex identity formation processes that cannot be fully captured through skills-based or competency-focused approaches alone; rather, understanding how students construct pre-professional identities through experiential learning requires qualitative methodologies sensitive to meaning-making and subjective interpretation.

This phenomenological study addresses these gaps by exploring the lived experiences of seven STIEPARI Semarang students who participated in international internship programs in Taiwan, examining how these experiences intersect with work motivation to shape their work readiness. Employing semi-structured in-depth interviews as the primary data collection

method, the research investigates three core questions: (1) How do students make meaning of their international internship experiences in cross-cultural contexts? (2) What learning, transformation, and challenges emerge during international internships that influence work readiness perceptions? (3) How does work motivation evolve through the internship journey and contribute to readiness for professional employment? By analyzing both students currently interning in Taiwan and those who have returned to Indonesia, this study captures temporal dynamics of adaptation, reflection, and integration. The findings contribute to theoretical understanding of experiential learning in international contexts, provide empirical insights into the Indonesia-Taiwan educational mobility pathway, and offer practical implications for designing and supporting international internship programs that maximize developmental outcomes for Indonesian business and hospitality students. Moreover, by employing phenomenological methodology—specifically interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) inspired by approaches demonstrated in nursing education research (Jahromi et al., 2023) and international student studies (Rosev, 2020)—this research honors the complexity and richness of individual student experiences while identifying shared themes that illuminate the essence of international internship as a transformative educational intervention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work Readiness: Conceptual Foundations and Dimensions

Work readiness is a multidimensional construct comprising the competencies and psychological preparedness necessary for professional transition. Caballero et al. (2011) developed the Work Readiness Scale (WRS), identifying four dimensions: personal characteristics, organizational acumen, work competence, and social intelligence. This framework ($\alpha=.96$) explains 44.7% of graduate employability variance, emphasizing that readiness extends beyond cognitive knowledge to dispositional qualities developed through experience.

Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) proposed the CareerEDGE model, integrating career development, experience, degree knowledge, generic skills, and emotional intelligence, with self-efficacy acting as a key mediator. In the Indonesian context, Sultoni et al. (2022) identified five culturally-relevant dimensions: prior experience, maturity, mental state, intellect, and self-development, confirming that cultural factors significantly shape how students perceive and develop readiness.

Tomlinson (2012) argues that employability is socially constructed and tied to identity through five themes: human capital, skills, social reproduction, positional conflict, and identity. This aligns with Jackson and Bridgstock (2018), who advocate for focusing on pre-professional identity formation. These interpretivist perspectives justify phenomenological approaches to work readiness, highlighting the importance of students' subjective meaning-making processes.

Experiential Learning Theory and Internship Experiences

Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) posits that learning occurs through a four-stage cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, emphasizing transformation over mere information transmission. This process is deepened when experiences violate expectations—triggering cognitive dissonance and reflection—a phenomenon Kolb and Kolb (2022) identify as particularly relevant for international contexts. Empirical evidence supports this; Bawica (2021) noted that 58% of interns receive job offers, while Supriyanto et al. (2022) demonstrated a significant positive effect on work readiness ($\beta=0.706$, $p<0.000$) mediated by motivation. Furthermore, Fauzan et al.

(2023) found that internships and motivation explain 65.90% of readiness variance, while Handoko (2021) observed that these experiences build practical skills and professional identity. On an international scale, Di Pietro's (2022) systematic review found that over 50% of studies reported enhanced cross-cultural communication, a finding echoed by Chen's (2025) analysis of workplace challenges and Nghia and Duyen's (2018, 2019) research on the shift toward a "learning-to-change-skills" mindset. Ultimately, these studies confirm that international internships facilitate holistic transformation through cross-cultural adaptation.

Work Motivation: Theoretical Frameworks and Development

Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a foundational understanding of work motivation by positing that satisfying the innate needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness facilitates intrinsic motivation and well-being. Crucially, SDT suggests that while competence is vital, intrinsic motivation is only sustained when environments support autonomy; controlling internship settings can undermine this drive even if skills are developed. Complementing this, Herzberg et al.'s (1959) Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between motivators (e.g., achievement, responsibility, growth) that generate satisfaction and hygiene factors (e.g., salary, supervision) that merely prevent dissatisfaction. This implies that internships must provide substantive challenges and growth opportunities to foster authentic motivation.

In the Indonesian vocational context, Supriyanto et al. (2022) demonstrated that work motivation positively impacts work readiness ($\beta=0.344$, $p=0.001$) and serves as a critical mediator in the internship-readiness relationship. This psychological interplay is further evidenced by Fauzan et al. (2023), who found that low student confidence can lead to restricted assignments, thereby stifling motivation. Additionally, Alharethi et al. (2025) highlighted that internships significantly enhance ability and role clarity, with individual mindfulness acting as a moderator that helps students maintain focus and lower stress. Ultimately, these frameworks and findings indicate that motivation during internships is a complex outcome of task characteristics, supportive mentorship, and individual psychological dispositions.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation in International Experiences

International students and interns undergo distinctive adaptation processes influencing learning outcomes. Wang et al. (2018) identified a two-phase U-curved process of psychological adaptation, with culture shock most pronounced during the first 9-24 months, while socio-cultural adaptation increases steadily. Bethel et al. (2020) demonstrated that host national connectedness fully mediates effects of language proficiency on psychological symptoms, emphasizing that relationships with host nationals constitute critical factors for successful adaptation.

For international internships specifically, Hilde et al. (2018) employed Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology to explore Flemish midwifery students' experiences in Suriname, identifying five themes including connection/disconnection and spatiality for thought, with overall essence captured as "process of awareness from self with focus on professional." Jahromi et al. (2023) used interpretative phenomenological analysis examining Iranian nursing students' internship experiences, finding that professional identity develops through cognition, acceptance, and role adoption, with movement toward professional self-efficacy via self-awareness and skill advancement.

Phenomenological Research on Internship Experiences

Phenomenological methodology offers distinct advantages for exploring internship experiences by prioritizing participants' subjective meaning-making. Shahzeydi et al. (2022)

conducted a multi-stakeholder descriptive qualitative study involving 47 participants examining nursing internship implementation in Iran, identifying five major themes: facilitation of socialization process, filling theory-practice gaps, improving self-confidence, clinical skill training opportunities, and clinical setting challenges. Their findings demonstrated that internships enhance professional performance, skills, self-confidence, and commitment.

Rosev (2020) employed transcendental phenomenological design with IPA to explore 12 international graduate students' internship experiences in the United States, identifying expectations, costs, and outcomes as larger concepts, with cultural transformation encompassing identity shifts and transformative studying abroad aspects. Lyu (2022) similarly used IPA examining Chinese international students seeking internships, identifying external barriers, internal barriers, health impacts, and coping mechanisms. In Indonesian contexts, Sitepu et al. (2022) demonstrated phenomenological approach with tourism students, finding gains in collaboration, time management, and hospitality practices. These studies demonstrate that phenomenological methodologies effectively capture complexity and transformative dimensions of internship experiences that quantitative approaches may overlook.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of STIEPARI Semarang students participating in international internship programs in Taiwan, specifically examining how these experiences shape work readiness and work motivation. Seven participants were purposively selected based on criteria including enrollment at STIEPARI Semarang, participation in Taiwan internship programs for minimum three months, and willingness to participate in in-depth interviews. The participant composition comprised three students currently interning at Formosa Yacht Resort in Taiwan (primarily in housekeeping positions) and four students who had completed their internships and returned to Indonesia, providing temporal diversity to capture both immersive experiences and retrospective reflections. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews lasting 45-60 minutes per participant, conducted face-to-face for participants in Taiwan and via online platforms (Zoom/Google Meet) for those in Indonesia. The interview guide contained 25 open-ended questions organized into nine thematic domains: internship experience overview, learning outcomes (technical and soft skills), challenges and adaptation strategies, work culture exposure, work motivation development, work readiness perceptions, critical reflection on transformation, international context specificities, and professional network formation. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent and supplemented with field notes documenting non-verbal cues and contextual observations. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase thematic analysis approach: (1) familiarization with data through repeated reading of transcripts, (2) generating initial codes systematically across the entire dataset, (3) searching for themes by collating codes into potential patterns, (4) reviewing themes to ensure coherence and distinction, (5) defining and naming themes to capture their essence, and (6) producing the analytical narrative with vivid extracts. Trustworthiness was established through multiple strategies: credibility via member checking where participants verified transcript accuracy and interpretations, transferability through thick description of contexts and participant experiences, dependability via maintaining comprehensive audit trails documenting analytical decisions, and confirmability through researcher reflexivity journaling to bracket personal assumptions and biases. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed

consent emphasizing voluntary participation and withdrawal rights, ensuring confidentiality through pseudonymization (P1-P7), and securing data storage with plans for deletion post-research completion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Thematic analysis of interview data revealed five superordinate themes characterizing participants' lived experiences of international internship in Taiwan and its relationship to work readiness and motivation development. These themes represent shared essences across participants while honoring individual variations in meaning-making and developmental trajectories.

Theme 1: International Internship as Transformative Cultural Immersion

Participants consistently framed their Taiwan internship experiences as profoundly transformative journeys extending far beyond technical skill acquisition. The international context created intensive cultural immersion that challenged pre-existing assumptions about work, professionalism, and self-capability. P2, currently interning in Taiwan, articulated: "At first, everything felt so different—the language, the work speed, how supervisors give instructions. But now I realize this experience is changing not just my skills but how I see myself as a future professional." Participants described experiencing initial culture shock characterized by communication difficulties, unfamiliar workplace norms, and feelings of inadequacy, followed by gradual adaptation marked by increased confidence and cultural competence. P5, who had returned to Indonesia, reflected retrospectively: "Looking back, those struggles in Taiwan—trying to understand Mandarin instructions, learning to read non-verbal cues from supervisors—those were actually building my resilience and adaptability more than any classroom lesson could." The temporal comparison between current interns and returned participants revealed that the transformative significance of international internship often becomes fully apparent only through post-experience reflection. Participants recognized that cross-cultural challenges, initially perceived as obstacles, ultimately constituted critical learning opportunities that domestic internships could not replicate. The theme underscores that international internship functions not merely as skills training but as holistic identity formation process where students reconstruct understanding of professional competence within global contexts.

Theme 2: Multidimensional Skill Development Through Authentic Work Engagement

All participants reported substantial skill development across technical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal domains through engagement with authentic workplace tasks. Technical skills varied by placement—housekeeping participants detailed proficiency in room preparation protocols, cleaning standards, inventory management, and quality inspection procedures meeting international hospitality benchmarks. P1 explained: "The Taiwanese standards are very strict. We learned proper bed-making techniques, bathroom sanitization sequences, time management to complete rooms within deadlines. It's completely different from practice labs at campus." Beyond technical competencies, participants emphasized development of soft skills including communication (navigating language barriers through creative problem-solving), teamwork (collaborating with multicultural staff), time management (balancing multiple responsibilities under pressure), customer service orientation (understanding guest expectations), and emotional regulation (managing stress and homesickness). P6 noted: "Working with Korean, Filipino, and local Taiwanese staff taught me

to communicate clearly despite language limits, be patient when misunderstandings happen, and appreciate different work styles." Critically, participants distinguished between classroom theoretical knowledge and practical wisdom gained through experiential learning. P3 observed: "In class, we learned about 'guest satisfaction' as a concept. In Taiwan, I experienced what it means when a guest complains, how to solve problems quickly, how your attitude affects outcomes. That practical knowledge stays with you differently." The authentic responsibility entrusted to participants—contrary to some domestic internships described as primarily observational—fostered genuine professional development. Participants reported increased self-efficacy stemming from successfully completing real work assignments, receiving positive feedback from supervisors, and contributing meaningfully to organizational operations.

Theme 3: Navigating Cross-Cultural Challenges as Catalyst for Growth

Language barriers, cultural differences in communication styles, and adjustment to unfamiliar living environments emerged as significant challenges that paradoxically served as primary growth catalysts. All participants acknowledged initial difficulties comprehending Mandarin instructions, particularly technical terminology and rapid conversational speech. P4 recounted: "The first week was terrifying. Supervisors would explain tasks in Mandarin, I'd understand maybe 30%, and I was too scared to keep asking. I made mistakes and felt incompetent." Strategies for overcoming language barriers included intensive self-study of work-related vocabulary, seeking assistance from bilingual colleagues, using translation applications, observing demonstrations carefully, and developing non-verbal communication skills. Participants also navigated cultural differences in workplace hierarchy, feedback styles (direct versus indirect), and social interaction norms. P7 explained: "Indonesian culture is more hierarchical but also warmer. In Taiwan, supervisors are professional but less personal. I had to learn not to interpret their directness as rudeness—it's just different communication culture." Living arrangements far from family support systems generated homesickness yet simultaneously fostered independence, self-reliance, and coping capacity. P2 reflected: "Being alone in Taiwan, I couldn't rely on family when problems arose. I had to solve things myself—financial budgeting, conflict with roommates, health issues. That independence is something I'll carry into my career." Participants demonstrated remarkable resilience, reframing initial struggles as valuable learning experiences rather than insurmountable obstacles. The theme reveals that cross-cultural challenges, when accompanied by adequate support structures, contribute substantially to developing adaptability, problem-solving capacity, and psychological resilience—qualities central to work readiness in globalized labor markets.

Theme 4: Evolution of Work Motivation from Extrinsic to Intrinsic Orientation

Participants' work motivation underwent discernible evolution throughout internship experiences, generally progressing from primarily extrinsic orientations (financial compensation, resume enhancement, graduation requirements) toward increasingly intrinsic motivations (professional growth, mastery, meaningful contribution). Pre-internship, most participants acknowledged pragmatic motivations. P5 admitted: "Initially, I joined this Taiwan program mainly for the salary and because it looks good on CV. I needed money and thought international experience would help job hunting." However, immersion in authentic work environments catalyzed motivational shifts as participants experienced competence development, autonomy in task execution, and relatedness through collegial relationships—satisfying the three basic psychological needs articulated in Self-Determination Theory. P1 described this transformation: "Now, money is secondary. What drives me is becoming really skilled at this work, earning my supervisor's trust, feeling like I'm actually contributing to the

resort's success. That satisfaction is different from just working for salary." Participants who received meaningful responsibilities, constructive feedback, and recognition for achievements demonstrated stronger intrinsic motivation compared to those assigned repetitive tasks with minimal autonomy. P6 contrasted experiences: "When supervisors trusted me to train new interns, gave me challenging assignments, asked my opinions on improvements – that made me genuinely motivated to excel. But friends who only did basic cleaning with no recognition felt demotivated despite same salary." The theme confirms theoretical predictions that work contexts satisfying psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness foster intrinsic motivation, which participants associated with sustained effort, creativity, and commitment to professional development. Returned participants (P4-P7) reported that intrinsic motivation cultivated during Taiwan internships persisted post-return, manifesting as proactive career planning, continued skill development, and heightened professional aspirations.

Theme 5: Enhanced Work Readiness Through Integrated Competence and Confidence

All participants perceived substantial increases in work readiness attributable to international internship experiences, conceptualizing readiness as integration of practical competencies and psychological confidence. When asked directly about work readiness, participants referenced multiple dimensions. Regarding professional competence, P3 stated: "I now have real skills employers value—not just theories but proven ability to work in demanding environments, handle pressure, solve problems independently. That's work readiness." Participants demonstrated organizational acumen developed through exposure to workplace cultures, hierarchies, expectations, and professional conduct standards. P7 explained: "I understand how organizations function—the importance of punctuality, following procedures, communicating with different levels, maintaining professionalism even when tired. These aren't taught in textbooks." Social intelligence and interpersonal effectiveness emerged through multicultural teamwork and customer interactions. Beyond competencies, participants emphasized psychological readiness characterized by self-confidence, reduced anxiety about employment transition, and realistic expectations. P4 reflected: "Before Taiwan, I was anxious about graduating—Will I be good enough? Can I handle real jobs? Now I know I can. I've already worked in professional environment successfully. That confidence changes everything." Participants contrasted themselves favorably with peers lacking internship experiences, perceiving comparative advantages in both skillsets and mental preparedness. P6 observed: "Classmates who haven't interned seem uncertain, worried about whether they'll cope with workplace demands. We've already lived it—we know we can adapt, learn, perform. That's psychological readiness." The temporal dimension proved significant: returned participants (P4-P7) articulated work readiness with greater clarity and confidence than current interns (P1-P3), suggesting that post-experience reflection consolidates readiness perceptions. Critically, participants integrated international context into their work readiness narratives, positioning themselves as globally competent professionals capable of functioning in diverse cultural environments—a distinctive advantage in competitive labor markets. The theme demonstrates that work readiness emerges not merely from skill acquisition but from holistic development encompassing technical proficiency, cultural competence, psychological confidence, and professional identity formation catalyzed by challenging, authentic international work experiences.

Discussion

The findings substantiate and extend theoretical frameworks regarding experiential learning, work motivation, and work readiness development while illuminating unique dimensions of international internships in Indonesia-Taiwan contexts. Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory receives strong empirical support: participants' narratives reveal the complete learning cycle from concrete experiences (authentic work tasks in unfamiliar cultural settings), through reflective observation (making sense of challenges and successes), to abstract conceptualization (developing theoretical understanding of professional competence), culminating in active experimentation (applying learned strategies). Critically, the international context intensifies this cycle by generating expectation violations—what Kolb and Kolb (2022) identify as primary catalysts for deep learning—through cultural differences, language barriers, and contrasting workplace norms. This aligns with Di Pietro's (2022) systematic review finding that international internships particularly enhance intrapersonal skills and cross-cultural competencies, outcomes less prominent in domestic placements.

The motivational trajectory from extrinsic to intrinsic orientation validates Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), demonstrating that workplace contexts satisfying basic psychological needs for competence (through meaningful responsibilities), autonomy (through trusted decision-making), and relatedness (through supportive collegial relationships) foster intrinsic motivation that persists beyond the internship period. This pattern mirrors findings from Indonesian vocational contexts (Supriyanto et al., 2022) while extending them to international settings. The integration of Herzberg et al.'s (1959) framework proves valuable: participants clearly distinguished motivators (achievement, recognition, meaningful work, responsibility) from hygiene factors (salary, working conditions), with the former generating authentic engagement. Participants receiving only hygiene factors without motivators—repetitive tasks without recognition—experienced diminished motivation despite adequate compensation, confirming that intrinsic motivators drive sustainable professional development.

Regarding work readiness, findings corroborate Caballero et al.'s (2011) four-dimensional model while emphasizing psychological readiness as equally critical as competency development. The confidence transformation participants described—from anxiety to assured capability—represents what Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) theorize as the mediating role of self-efficacy in translating experiences into employability. Participants' work readiness narratives integrated personal characteristics (resilience, adaptability), organizational acumen (workplace culture understanding), work competence (technical and soft skills), and social intelligence (interpersonal effectiveness)—the exact dimensions Caballero et al. identified. However, the international context adds a fifth dimension: global competence characterized by cross-cultural communication abilities, cultural intelligence, and comfort functioning in diverse environments. This extension proves particularly relevant for contemporary labor markets increasingly demanding multicultural capabilities.

The cross-cultural adaptation challenges participants navigated align with Wang et al.'s (2018) U-curve model, with initial culture shock eventually transforming into competence and confidence. The critical role of host national connectedness (Bethel et al., 2020) emerged through participants' emphasis on supportive relationships with Taiwanese supervisors and multicultural colleagues facilitating adaptation and learning. Compared to studies of Western internship destinations (Lyu, 2022; Rosev, 2020), the Indonesia-Taiwan pathway presents distinct characteristics: intra-Asian cultural proximities coexisting with significant language barriers, hierarchical workplace cultures familiar yet distinctively enacted, and geographic

accessibility enabling shorter-term placements. These factors shape adaptation trajectories differently than Western contexts, suggesting that intra-Asian international internships warrant dedicated scholarly attention.

Findings extend Indonesian work readiness research (Latif et al., 2017; Sultoni et al., 2022) by demonstrating how international experiences accelerate development across all readiness dimensions simultaneously. While domestic internships develop competencies incrementally, international placements' compressed intensity and cross-cultural complexity catalyze holistic transformation encompassing technical skills, soft skills, psychological resilience, and professional identity—supporting Handoko's (2021) phenomenological findings that organizational experiences develop capabilities beyond classroom learning. The temporal comparison between current interns and returned participants reveals that work readiness crystallizes through post-experience reflection, suggesting programmatic value in structured reflection activities during and after international internships.

Limitations warrant acknowledgment. The study's seven participants, while appropriate for phenomenological inquiry, represent limited diversity regarding internship locations (single destination), organizational contexts (primarily hospitality), and demographic characteristics. Findings may not transfer to different industries, destinations, or student populations. The researcher's insider position as a fellow STIEPARI student, though facilitating rapport, potentially influenced interpretation despite bracketing efforts. Temporal constraints prevented longitudinal tracking of participants' career trajectories post-graduation, limiting understanding of work readiness's long-term career outcomes. Future research should examine diverse Indonesia-outbound pathways, compare international versus domestic internship developmental outcomes systematically, and conduct longitudinal studies tracking actual employment success and career satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

This phenomenological study illuminates how international internship experiences in Taiwan shape Indonesian business students' work readiness and motivation through transformative cultural immersion, multidimensional skill development, resilience-building challenges, and motivational evolution from extrinsic to intrinsic orientations. Findings demonstrate that work readiness emerges from integrated development across technical competencies, soft skills, cross-cultural capabilities, and psychological confidence—with international contexts accelerating holistic transformation beyond what domestic placements typically achieve. Theoretically, the study validates and extends Experiential Learning Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and work readiness frameworks while identifying global competence as a fifth critical dimension for contemporary graduates. The Indonesia-Taiwan pathway reveals distinctive intra-Asian international internship characteristics warranting scholarly attention alongside extensively studied Western destinations.

Practically, findings hold significant implications for Indonesian higher education institutions designing international internship programs. Programs should ensure authentic work responsibilities satisfying psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness to foster intrinsic motivation; provide pre-departure cultural preparation and language training alongside ongoing support for cross-cultural adaptation; and incorporate structured reflection activities during and post-internship to consolidate learning and crystallize work readiness perceptions. For students, understanding that challenges constitute growth opportunities rather than obstacles can reframe struggles productively. For employers, graduates with international

internship experiences bring not merely technical skills but demonstrated adaptability, resilience, cultural intelligence, and global professional perspectives—valuable assets for organizations operating in multicultural contexts. Future research should examine diverse international pathways, compare developmental outcomes across contexts systematically, and track long-term career impacts to fully understand international internships' value in preparing globally competent Indonesian graduates for increasingly interconnected labor markets.

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